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ABSTRACT

This study evaluated the special education program of the Hawaii State Department of Education including identification of those program concerns, issues, and problems which need policy or administrative changes or further study. Data collection included document review, onsite interviews with stakeholders, and a questionnaire survey of school level administrators and teachers. A total of 327 learning disabled and emotionally handicapped students were interviewed. A total of 153 special education staff, 94 regular teachers, and 350 parents of students from 21 schools completed a survey in April-May 1990 in addition to 35 individuals from key stakeholder groups such as the State Board of Education and the Department of Human Services. Special education issues identified included: student identification; placement options; learning disabled students; emotionally handicapped students; culturally diverse, minority, and rural students; transition goals; teacher training, certification and retention; and related services. Stressed is the need for a longterm effort to restructure the system with emphasis on integrating special education with regular education. The report identifies top priority issues in the areas of instruction/treatment, mainstreaming, and student identification. Noted are serious definitional problems with respect to learning disabilities and emotional disturbances giving rise to inter-district disparities. Teachers are seen to need assistance in meeting the needs of mainstreamed students. The report also identifies communication gaps among entities serving special education students (e.g., state legislature, board of education, special education parents, and the community at large). Establishment of a database on overall program impact is strongly encouraged. (62 references) (DB)

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CONCERNS, ISSUES, AND PROBLEMS IN SPECIAL EDUCATION: A COMPOSITE OF PERSPECTIVES

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INTRODUCTION

The Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975 (Public Law 94-142) requires a free, appropriate public education for all handicapped children aged 3-21. The objectives of this landmark legislation are to:

- meet the unique educational needs of all handicapped children through an Individualized Education Program (IEP) and placement with nonhandicapped children to the maximum extent possible;
- guarantee due process in identification, placement and evaluation;
- assist states and localities provide for this education; and
- assess the effectiveness of such efforts.

Hawaii's administrative rule for implementing P.L. 94-142 identifies the Department of Education (DOE) as the primary agency for providing education services to handicapped children. DOE uses a comprehensive, multi-year framework (the state plan) to develop standards, guidelines, and procedures for special education. According to the most recent state plan the overall objectives for special education include:

- development of a comprehensive plan for early childhood identification and services;
- increased use of computer-assisted instruction and data-based management;
- enhancement of programming for the mildly handicapped;
- implementation of promising practices for the moderately and severely handicapped; and
- development of a comprehensive information system for program evaluation.

It includes a full service goal of expanding special education services to include handicapped children from birth through age 21.

The DOE's special education program reaches beyond minimum compliance with provisions of the federal law. In addition to ensuring a free, appropriate public education to all handicapped children, the program seeks to maximize potential and self-sufficiency in preparing these children to become contributing members of their families and society. It places heavy emphasis on post-school transition goals through individualized transition planning.

According to the state plan for 1987-93, there are over 12,000 children and youth of ages 3 to 20 who are eligible for special education. These children represent approximately 7.3% of the total school population. Their classifications include:

- Specific learning disabled (60%).
- Speech impaired (18%)
- Emotionally handicapped (17%)
- Mentally retarded/other severely handicapped (5%)
- Preschool (<1%).

For 1989-90, LD students made up 3.9% of the total student population . The ratio has remained constant at about 4% since the 1985-86 school year. Part-Hawaiian students accounted for 27.1% of all students receiving special education services.

Special education students receive services in several educational arrangements, including:

Integrated self-contained (ISC)	54.3%
Resource Services (RS)	26.9%
Full-time self-contained (FSC)	15.8%
Itinerant Services (IS)	2.9%

In the ISC arrangement, the special education student receives special education and related services for at least half of each instructional day. Instruction for the remainder of the day is provided in regular education. In the RS arrangement, the student receives special education and related services for at least one period of each instructional day on the average over the course of a week. In the FSC arrangement, the student receives special education and related services for the full school day or for all but one instruction period per day. In the IS arrangement, the student receives services for at least one period per week from an itinerant special education teacher and/or service provider. In addition, students may receive support services (i.e., student-oriented consultations) provided by a special education teacher and/or service provider (e.g., speech pathologist).

There are over 1,400 special education teachers and assistants in special education. A majority (66 percent) are teachers and about one-third (34 percent) are educational assistants. In addition, there are 327 special education personnel who supervise a variety of direct and support services, including diagnostic and special services. Most of the

9,000 regular education teachers will serve the needs of mainstreamed handicapped students at some point in their teaching careers. In 1990, the state legislature authorized $35.5 million in support of special education services.

In providing services to handicapped children, the DOE cooperates with other state agencies including the Department of Health and the Department of Human Services. Cooperation and coordination of service delivery is formalized in "memoranda of agreement" among the agencies. In addition, the department maintains a close working relationship with the University of Hawaii in staff training and the conduct of special research studies.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

In November 1989, the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory (NWREL) was contracted by the DOE to conduct an evaluation of its Special Education Program. The evaluation was to:

- provide an assessment to determine program concerns, issues and problems; and
- prioritize the identified concerns, issues and problems for initiating policy or administrative changes or for further study.

Program concerns, issues or problems were to be identified through (a) a review of relevant state and program documents and the extant literature on special education, and (b) an information gathering effort to cover a wide range of stakeholder groups, from policymakers who determine the nature and scope of special education services to students who receive such services.

PROCEDURES

A combination of survey research methods was used in the evaluation. Specifically, the primary data collection methods included document review, onsite interview and questionnaire survey. In general, evaluation information was obtained from large groups (e.g., school level staff) through questionnaire surveys. Smaller groups (e.g., policy makers and state level managers) were interviewed onsite.

More specifically, onsite interviews were conducted with the following stakeholder groups:

- Members of the Special Education Committee of the Board of Education
- Members of the Leadership Team

- State level Special Education administrators and specialists
- State level General Education administrators and specialists
- District level Special Education specialists
- Key personnel in the Department of Health, and Department of Human Services
- Members of special interest/advocacy groups or organizations (e.g., University of Hawaii College of Education, Hawaii Association for Children and Adults with Learning Disabilities)

Survey questionnaires were administered to the following groups:

- School level administrators
- School level special education staff
- School level regular staff

Sampling

To reduce data collection costs, a stratified random sample of schools was identified for survey administration and onsite interviews. The stratification factors included district and grade span (i.e., elementary, intermediate and high schools). All seven districts were included in the survey. Three schools in each district were selected to cover the three grade spans.

All school administrators and special education staff at the selected schools were asked to participate in the survey. A 10 percent random sample of the regular school staff was included in the survey. In addition, we conducted interviews with an approximately 30 percent random sample of students in the special education program at the selected schools. As a general rule, no fewer than two students were identified for interview at each school. All special education parents at the selected schools were asked to complete a survey questionnaire. The questionnaire was brought home by special education students and returned to special teachers after it was completed by a parent.

Instrument Development

In developing survey questionnaires and interview schedules, we first reviewed existing resources (e.g., instruments housed in the NWREL Test Center and those used in past evaluations of special education programs). Whenever feasible, existing measures were adapted for use in the evaluation.

The survey instruments were somewhat structured to facilitate data gathering, analysis and interpretation. However, open-ended items were included to enrich the database and to solicit (a) concerns, issues, or problems not identified in the instrument, and (b) suggestions for resolving the various concerns, issues or problems.

Draft versions of all new instruments were reviewed and approved by DOE staff before they were used on site visits. Two interview schedules were developed, one for use with policymakers and administrators, the other with students. In addition, survey questionnaires were created for use with school level staff (including special and regular education teacher and school administrators) as well as parents. As a rule, items in the interview schedules were phrased in general terms to solicit perceptions and comments. Interview schedules were designed to last from 30 to 45 minutes. The survey questionnaires included both structured and open-ended items. Each questionnaire was designed to take 20 minutes or less to complete.

Data Collection

Preparation for data collection included the development of sampling plans for surveying school level staff (school administrators, special education staff and regular school staff) and for conducting interviews with students. As indicated earlier, we used stratified random sampling procedures to identify three schools (one elementary, one intermediate and one high school) in each district as sample schools. All survey and interview activities requiring a random sample of respondents were conducted in the sample schools. The dissemination of survey forms and related materials was conducted in collaboration with school level staff. Specifically, batches of the survey instruments were distributed to the principals' offices for dissemination to individual respondents. The principals were also responsible for collecting and returning the completed survey forms.

In April and May of 1990, NWREL staff conducted interviews with the various stakeholder groups and special education students. Survey administrations also took place during those two months.

Data Analysis

NWREL staff first performed a sample audit on the completed survey forms to assess the general quality of the data. No serious discrepancies were noted. Evaluation data were then entered into microcomputer files for storage and analysis. We used essentially descriptive statistics in data aggregation and analysis. These included frequency counts, percentages, means and standard deviations.

FINDINGS

Review of Relevant State and Program Documents

The research team reviewed a large number of documents developed by the special education program and a wide range of other state agencies. The documents included past evaluation reports, research reports, planning documents, policy statements, as well as inter- and intra- agency memoranda.

The following are among concerns, problems and issues (CPIs) described or identified in the documents:

A 1989 Legislative Reference Bureau report addressed the concerns that DOE failed to meet the mandatory timelines for evaluation of students and that Hawaii ranked last among all the states in the percentage of students identified and served as handicapped. The report indicated that this last place ranking did not mean that Hawaii was in violation of federal regulations but that it did raise concerns about the adequacy of the evaluation procedures and criteria for special education certification. The report recommended a closer examination and possible revision of the current identification and testing procedures and the establishment of incentives and training programs to attract qualified personnel.

A 1989 University of Hawaii research report found that the "off-ratio" positions afforded districts and schools greater flexibility in meeting needs, increased time spent on individualized direct services to students mainstreamed into regular classrooms, and helped promote mainstreaming to regular education. However, some drawbacks included a lack of experienced staff, inappropriate hiring timeframe, and a lack of classroom space for pull-out services.

The study found that schools where mainstreaming had been most successful exhibited good communication between regular and special education teachers, in addition to having experienced "off-ratio" staff. The study recommended that this effort be further enhanced by providing more aid to regular classroom teachers in the form of educational assistants. Data on students moving to less restrictive environments were incomplete and inconclusive. This was consistent with the nationwide lack of good assessment of student movement. The researchers noted that the state's current student information system could be a valuable information resource if data were updated in a reliable manner across districts.

A 1986 statewide survey identified class size and workload demands as major issues. The data indicated a need to reduce staffing ratios for the mildly handicapped in order to facilitate students returning to the mainstream. A majority (65%) of such students were reported to have been served in settings where the staffing ratio exceeded 15. These high ratios were correlated with a high turnover rate and increased hiring of non-certificated personnel.

The same survey found that over 10 percent of Hawaii's special education teachers did not hold a teaching certificate in that field. The report indicated that while this issue was not unique to Hawaii, it did merit concern and effective remediation. The survey identified excessive workload as the central barrier to teacher recruitment and retention.

A 1989 review of the special education program assessed the status, appropriateness, and impact of the allocation of resources to special education in light of state, federal and court-ordered requirements. The review identified paperwork entailed in the development of IEPs as a contributing factor to the teacher burnout problem. This has resulted in a new provision in the teachers' collective bargaining contract and an agreement to furnish special education teachers with microcomputers to help alleviate the situation.

The same study concluded that the special education program entailed substantial costs and criticized the DOE for its lack of cost analysis and containment. The study also raised questions about the actual scope of the special education program, workload criteria, budgeting practices, coordination of services with other agencies, and whether top-down program expansions truly reflected school and district priorities. The report recommended that DOE take the lead in addressing these concerns.

A 1985 task force developed a set of staffing goals for special education. The state legislature subsequently provided funding for a 90% implementation of these goals. However, full implementation is perceived as the single, most far-reaching action which will impact favorably upon both special education teachers and students.

Several documents identified a significant increase in the emotionally handicapped population in the past decade, with a concomitant rise in disciplinary/behavioral problems. There are no statewide pre-referral intervention programs even though early intervention is widely regarded as a viable means of decreasing the need for costly, formal evaluations for special education. Furthermore, there are gaps in preventative services provided by the Children's Mental Health Division of the Department of Health.

Review of Current Literature

Special education issues in Hawaii are similar to those identified elsewhere in the nation. These issues include:

Student Identification

Special education classification varies considerably by location. In the 1985-1986 school year, for example, 10.7% of all students received special education services, yet the percentage in individual states varied twofold, from 7.3 in Hawaii to 16.8 in Massachusetts (Singer, et al., 1989). The percentage of children classified into each special education group is even more variable. Rhode Island for example, classified 65.1% of its special needs population as learning disabled. In Georgia, only 24.9% of special education students were similarly classified (Singer, et al, 1989).

Some states use preassessment screening and instructional interventions to reduce referrals for more comprehensive special education evaluations--particularly for the LD, EH, and the speech/language handicapped. A survey of teachers who had experience with preassessment teams indicated that they were generally pleased with such teams, but did not agree that the teams' intervention dealt successfully with referral problems (Harrington & Gibson, 1986).

Kelemen-Lohnas (1987) found that the best predictor of referral to special education was the teacher's rating of the student's ability to perform in a regular classroom the following year. The most accurate predictor of actual special education placement was the teacher's evaluation of the child's motivation level.

To clarify the LD identification process, Wisconsin has developed an inservice workbook targeted primarily at regular education teachers (Halseth, 1985). Minnesota has produced a special education users' manual detailing 15 essential program components and corresponding standards, evaluation and planning processes.

Placement Options

Placing mildly handicapped students in resource rooms for part of the school day has been described as an unnecessary form of segregation (Lambert, 1988). Supporters of the "Regular Education Initiative" would like to see a more integrated approach to serving the mildly handicapped, based on the belief that barriers to learning lie within the school environment rather than student deficits (Chalfont, 1989; McKinney & Hocutt, 1988; Trach & Rusch, 1988). In general, failure to use the least restrictive environment has been a critical issue in special education (Leinhardt & Pallay, 1982).

Another study (Furlong, 1988) noted that LD placement was influenced by students' discrepancy scores, but that initial evaluation served as a more reliable predictor of post-evaluation status. Kelemen-Lohnas (1987) described this emphasis on prereferral status in placement decision-making as "anchoring."

Affleck, et al. (1988) compared pull-out with an integrated classroom model and found comparable results on achievement tests. The integrated approach was, however, more cost-effective. Another study (Jenkins & Heinen, 1989) found that a majority of elementary students preferred obtaining additional help from their regular classroom teacher rather than from a specialist (whether in an in-class or pull-out model). The effects of placement environment (e.g., the pull-out setting) on students' self-concept has been identified as a major issue (Chapman, 1988).

Learning Disabled Students

For the 1989-90 school year, learning disabled students comprised the largest sector (60%) of Hawaii's special education population. Nationally, 43% of special education students were learning disabled (Gerber & Donnerstein, 1989). There appear to be definitional problems with learning disabilities which have led to an over-representation of LD students in special education (Hooper & Willis, 1989; Siegel, 1988; Bos, et al., 1984-85). One of the basic questions has to do with the differences and similarities

between LD and low-achieving remedial students with respect to learning levels, rates, and styles (Jenkins, et al., 1988; Shinn, et al., 1986). Davis and Smith (1984), for example, identified a concern over the rapid growth of the LD population, particularly among minority groups. Hyperactive children are also more likely to be identified as needing special education services (Sandoval & Lambert, 1984-85). Another issue relates to minimum competency testing of mildly handicapped students for high school graduation (MacMillan, et al. 1988; Walthall, 1987).

The use of severe aptitude-achievement discrepancy as an LD eligibility criterion is pervasive (Reynolds, 1984-85; Mellard, 1987). Federal criteria underscore this discrepancy as a major LD indicator (Chalfont, 1989; Dangel & Ensminger, 1988). However, in some cases, the discrepancy may be more appropriately used to distinguish among learning disabilities than to differentiate between LD and other handicapping conditions (Parrill, 1987). The emerging consensus seems to be that discrepancy is a necessary but not sufficient criterion in LD identification. The teacher's role is still crucial in diagnosing learning disabilities (Kavale, 1987; Mastropieri, 1987; Scruggs, 1987; Willson, 1987). There is ample research evidence to indicate that the identification of learning disabilities is a critical issue in special education (Davis & Smith, 1984; Shepard, 1983).

Emotionally Handicapped Students

Emotionally handicapped students are a particularly intractable segment of the special education population (Cross & Slee, 1988; Smith, 1987; Paul, 1985; Reyher, 1985). Increased teacher stress is correlated with student behavior disorders (Cross & Slee, 1988). Local availability of mental health services and attitudes toward difficult behavior largely dictate the extent to which such students are served (Knitzer, Steinberg, & Fleisch, 1990; Rutherfor, et al., 1988).

Moreover, there are hazy definitional boundaries between emotionally handicaps and learning disabilities and between learning disabled students and low-achieving regular education students (DeFrances-VanDexter, 1988; Singer, et al, 1989). Biases in assessing the performance of culturally diverse students is another concern. For student identification, some researchers (e.g., Sugai, 1988) recommend the use of direct curriculum-based assessment rather than pychometrically-based methods.

Culturally Diverse, Minority, Rural Students

Cultural, ethnic and rural diversity presents additional challenges in insuring appropriate special education services for all children. Linguistic or socio-cultural differences may lead to the over-identification of certain student populations as learning disabled (Ortiz & Maldonado-Colon, 1986). Biases in assessment methods may also lead to excessive referrals of LD and speech impaired students (Sugai, 1988; Willig, 1986; Maheady, 1985). Low achievement is often used inappropriately as a handicapping indicator.

In a study of the Montgomery County Public Schools in Maryland, Bowman (1988) found that classroom teachers tend to emphasize management rather than instruction in working with low-achieving students and that teacher expectations play a pivotal role in

the special education referral process . A partial solution is to increase teachers' multicultural awareness and to use multiple assessment measures (Sue, 1988).

Several factors are likely to worsen the identification problem. These include (a) a rise in the minority school population, (b) the continued high poverty rate in this population and (c) its vulnerability to early development of handicapping conditions (Murphy & Simon, 1987). A survey of members of the Council for Exceptional Children indicates a need to provide greater coverage of ethnic and multicultural issues in the professional literature (Kallum, et al. 1988).

Rural areas face the likelihood of a lack of qualified teachers with certification and a limited pool of other resources. The use of technology to support special education programs in more remote, resource poor areas is a field of emerging interest (Vanderheiden, 1987).

Transition Goals

Increasingly, emphasis is placed on the post-school quality of life for special education students and parents' role in facilitating a successful transition from school to independent living and jobs. For example, the entire April 1987 issue of *Exceptional Children* is devoted to transition issues. Increasingly, educators are concerned about whether handicapped adolescents are being adequately prepared for adult life where poor social skills may prove a greater barrier than academic deficits (Feigin & Meisgeier, 1987). This is particularly important in rural areas where limited resources pose additional challenges in providing adequate career/vocational education (Clark & White, 1985). Similar concerns are expressed across university campuses where LD students also represent the fastest growing handicapped population (Wilchesky, 1986).

Teacher Training, Certification and Retention

Teacher shortages and certification standards have become major concerns in states struggling to meet their staffing goals and to reduce the use of non-certificated teachers in special education. In recent years, national studies have identified concerns over a perceived decline in the quality of teacher training programs and a lack of communication between colleges of education and state education agencies (Noel, et al., 1986).

Some states are re-examining the need for categorical (versus generic) teacher preparation (Cobb, et al., 1989). Some researchers are beginning to question whether the certification process needs to include training for specific handicapping conditions, especially with regard to the mildly disabled students (Chapey, et al., 1985; O'Sullivan, et al., 1987; Marston, 1987; McLaughlin & Strettner-Eaton, 1988)

In a 1988 nationwide survey, Ramsey (1988) reported that 26 states were adopting or devising specialty area tests to assess teacher competency. A national teacher examination is a possible option for the future. Some states are developing experiential-based certification policies (Smith & Powers, 1987). In Utah, for example, one-half of the teacher education program is devoted to field experience (Welch & Kukic, 1988).

Related Services

Hawaii's problems in serving mentally ill children mirror nationwide statistics compiled by the National Mental Health Association. According to a soon-to-be released study, two-thirds of such youngsters are not getting the special help they are entitled to under the law (Knitzer, Steinberg, & Fleish, 1990).

Other Issues

In reviewing the literature, we have identified a long list of other issues in special education. Among these issues are: (a) documentation of student progress (Sheehan & Keogh, 1981); (b) provision of services to preschool children (Meisels, 1985; Swan, 1984); and (c) a lack of common monitoring and evaluation procedures (Meisels, 1985).

Student Interviews

The Interview Sample

A 30 percent stratified random sample of special education students in grades K - 12 was identified for onsite interviews during the last two weeks of April, 1990. Each interview was approximately 25 minutes in length.

A total of 327 learning disabled and emotionally handicapped students were interviewed. There were 44 elementary, 126 intermediate and 157 high school students. Of the elementary students, 43 percent had been in special education for three or more years and 16 percent for five or more years. A majority (77 percent) of the intermediate students had been in special education for three or more years and 44 percent for five or more years. Of the high school students, 69 percent had been in the program for three or more years, and 31 percent for five or more years. Another 9 percent of the high school students had been in special education for 10 or more years.

Over one-half (57 percent) of the elementary students received instructional services in reading, 48 percent in mathematics, and 23 percent in spelling. Of the intermediate students, 59 percent received services in English, 52 percent in mathematics, and 45 percent in social studies. Approximately one-half (47 percent) of the high school students received help in English, 40 percent in social studies, and 27 percent in mathematics.

Other areas in which the special education students received services included language arts, writing, science, computer, behavior, health, art, physical education, guidance, occupational skills, home economics and homework. Some EH students were placed in self-contained classes, receiving services in all subject areas.

A predominant majority (over 95 percent) of the students received special education services in a pull-out setting. At elementary grades, students left their regular classroom

at a scheduled time each day to receive special assistance to augment the regular curriculum. In intermediate and high schools, students were scheduled into special classes to receive assistance in specific subjects. According to the students, these classes do not provide the same type of credit toward graduation as regular classes. Students receive a high school certificate of completion when they graduate. Except for one elementary student, no students reported receiving special education services in the regular classroom. A small number of students (2.3% elementary, 4.0% intermediate and 3.8% high school) remained in a special education classroom all day to receive assistance in all subject areas. These students will graduate with a high school certificate of completion, not a diploma.

During the interviews, students were asked a series of questions regarding:

- where they received special education services;
- where they would prefer to receive the services;
- whether they liked or disliked being in special education;
- the kind of help they received in special education;
- whether they learned things differently in their special education classes;
- whether they received help from others in their school; and
- whether they had an opportunity to do things with other students in their school.

Student responses were content analyzed to detect patterns of concerns, issues and problems the students might have encountered.

General Student Perceptions

It appears that for most students, receiving special education assistance has been a mixed blessing. There is a general perception that regular and special education often operate in a parallel fashion, a school within a school, each having a separate and distinct faculty. By contrasting regular and special education services, students were able to talk about their respective advantages and disadvantages.

The students, regardless of grade level, generally preferred the special education environment. This preference was predicated on special education classes being easier both in content and in instructional format, and on the negative treatment special education students had received from their regular education peers who communicated disdain and shame for their being "different." Indeed, students are socialized into a special education culture, with its own norms, beliefs and behaviors. As the feeling of "differentness" deepens as they move from lower to higher grades, special education becomes an integral and indelible part of their self-image and personal identity. For many students, particularly those at the upper grades, they are not merely students receiving help in a special program, they are the special program.

When students talked about the attributes of special education, their comments centered on four major areas: curriculum and instruction, the teacher, the classroom structure, and the classroom ambiance. These themes cut across grade levels and handicapping categories. The students' experiences in special education were quite different from their experiences in regular education. In particular, the learning environment created by their special education teachers was a major contributing factor to the "differentness" that they experienced.

In the sections to follow, we discuss, separately for each grade span, specific concerns, problems and issues (CPIs) as well as positive aspects of the special education program identified in the student interviews.

Elementary Students

As a group, elementary students spoke positively about their special education experiences and their special education teachers. Their only real concerns were that:

- the work in special education was too easy; and
- they were falling further behind their regular education peers.

However, when asked if they wanted harder, more challenging work, they appeared ambivalent.

All but one of the students said that they went to another room for special education. A predominant majority (97.7%) preferred this arrangement to having someone come into their classroom to provide special help. Regardless of the number of years students have received special assistance, special education is perceived as helpful and pleasant. Students spoke positively about how much easier it was to learn in special education because the curriculum and materials were easier (61.4%). They made positive statements about the way the class was structured (36.4%), the atmosphere in the class (36.4%), and the teacher (34.1%) who made all this possible.

Student comments on curriculum and instruction fell into four general areas: the difficulty level of the materials, how material was presented, the ease with which tasks could be performed, and the limited amount of homework. One student noted, for example, that to learn new vocabulary words his special education teacher had him draw pictures on vocabulary word cards to help him remember the words. According to this student the pictures helped him learn his new vocabulary words each week. Other students reported that the teacher "writes everything on the board, shows you how to do the work step-by-step and breaks the directions into smaller pieces." Having no homework or a limited amount of homework and having an opportunity to review their work as often as needed were cited by students as other positive attributes of their special education class.

According to the students, their special education classrooms are structured to provide a more conducive learning environment. Not only are classes smaller but students are able to work at their own pace individually or in small work groups. Also, in comparison with

the regular class, there is apparently less work to do, more interaction among students, and a greater variety of work arrangements and activities.

The students indicated that they liked their special education classes better than regular education because they were rewarded for work completed on time and they did not ridicule one another. Special education classrooms were organized for success and students were happier.

For many students the fact that they could earn a reward for completing an assignment motivated them to work harder. One student commented, for example, that he liked learning how to read because he could use the computer after he finished his work. Another noted that he worked harder now because he got to play Nintendo when he was done with an assignment.

The students reported that the teacher was the key to their liking special education. Despite the fact that some special education teachers were characterized as strict disciplinarians, the students attributed their preference for special education to the kind of help they received from their special education teacher. It was the teacher who made it easier to understand new material, gave personalized attention, and helped students get good grades.

In addition to the special education teacher, the students also received help from others in the school, including school administrators, regular teachers, friends, and counselors.

Intermediate Students

Unlike their elementary counterparts, intermediate students had mixed feelings about where they preferred to receive special education services. Approximately two-thirds (64.3%) of the students interviewed wished to continue receiving assistance outside their regular classroom. The others (35.7%) would like to receive help while remaining in their regular classrooms.

In our interviews, the following CPIs emerged:

- The work in the special education class is easy and below grade level, making it all but impossible to catch up with regular school work.
- For adolescents concerned with peer acceptance, being a part of the mainstream is important.
- By the time special education students reach the intermediate grades, they feel the stigma of being different and the feeling is pervasive.

Many special education students indicated that the work in the regular class was "harder and more challenging and you are more likely to learn more if you receive help in the regular classroom. With everyone working at approximately the same level in the regular classroom, students will not fall behind."

The students stated that because special education material was presented at a level and in a teaching style that made it easier for them to learn, the regular education students labeled them as dumb and stupid. As a result, they felt embarrassed and shamed.

For many of these students, special education has become the place where they receive instruction in most, if not all, of their academic subjects. They are acutely aware that what and how they are taught are considerably different from what and how their regular education peers are taught. As a result, these students wish to remain in their special education classes away from any taunting that may come from regular education students -- even if it means falling further behind in specific academic areas.

Students who would like to receive help while in their regular classroom believed that they would learn more because the material would be more challenging and they would be working at the same level as their peers. These students felt that in-class help would boost their achievement to a level comparable to that of their peers.

Some students indicated that they preferred to remain in their regular classroom largely because they wanted to be like everyone else. They wanted to go to different classes for different subjects like their peers did. Special education students receiving assistance in multiple subjects often remained in the same class with the same teacher for several consecutive periods. This contributed further to the "differentness" experienced by special education students who already felt the stigma of being in a world apart from their regular education peers.

Many students noted that what they were taught in special education was several grade levels behind their regular education peers. Several students said that they would not take their books and materials home for fear that other students would tease them.

On the positive side, the students indicated that in the special education class the material was taught differently and was easier to learn (54.8%). Classroom structure (25.4%), classroom ambiance (18.2%), and the teacher (16.7%) were also mentioned as reasons why students preferred their special education classroom.

Despite their awareness of slipping further behind their regular education peers, the students reported that the help they received in special education was making a positive difference. They were "taught skills step-by-step," and special education teachers were willing to "repeatedly explain new material and to show students how to do their work."

Smaller classes, a variety of learning activities, and the ability to work at a pace commensurate with one's learning style were cited most often by students as reasons for preferring special education classes to regular education classes. The students reported that with smaller classes they were able to get more of their teachers time and the individualized attention had made a difference in their being able to learn. The smaller class allowed students to work at different levels and at a self-directed pace. This resulted in students feeling more comfortable with the learning process.

The positive atmosphere in the special education classroom was cited by many students as a primary reason for preferring special education to the regular classroom. Specifically, students noted that in special education classes they were not ridiculed or

teased and they could relax and have fun. In addition, many special education teachers rewarded their students' good behavior and performance on academic tasks with games, activities, and/or parties. For many students this was the first time they had been reinforced for a "job well done."

Even though a third of the students interviewed favored receiving help in a regular classroom, the special education teacher was the individual all wanted to receive help from, regardless of the setting. The students indicated that special education teachers talked more slowly, were more lenient and understanding, worked individually with students, and had more time to help students. In addition, they "explain and show you how to work problems and are more patient when you do not understand something." Clearly, for these students the special education teacher made a critical difference in whether they were able to learn new material or master old material in a new way.

In addition to help from the special education teacher, students noted that they also received assistance from schools administrators, regular teachers, friends, counselors and aides, when needed. They also participated in a variety of extracurricular activities with students in their regular education programs. This occurred most often in physical education and elective classes.

High School Students

Like their counterparts at the intermediate level, high school students had mixed feelings about their classroom of choice for receiving help from special education. Our interviews with these students surfaced the following CPIs:

- Special education is too easy and not challenging, allowing students to fall further behind in academic work.
- Special education students are stigmatized and suffer from a sense of social isolation and shame.
- Unlike regular classes, special education classes do not provide credits toward a graduation diploma.

Over 20 percent of the students interviewed indicated that they would prefer to get help in the regular classroom. These students felt that the material presented in the regular classroom was harder and more challenging. For these students, classwork in special education was "too easy," not challenging," and "terribly repetitive." As a result, they were not learning what they needed to learn to catch up with their peers in the regular classes and therefore would never be able to exit from special education. This feeling was particularly pervasive among students who had been in special education for three or more years. These students believed that as the amount of time they spent in special education increased, their chances of being able to return to the regular classroom decreased.

The students indicated that they would like to receive special education services in the regular classroom in one-on-one tutorials (12.7%) or in small groups (8.9%). Their preference was primarily related to the degree they felt stigmatized for being different.

Small group instruction was more desirable to insecure students who felt that a group can be better insulated from peer ostracism than can individual students.

In the students' view, not only did the instruction and material in the two types of classrooms differ, the expectations for student achievement were also different. Special education was seen as less motivating and challenging. After a number of years in special education, students felt that they lacked the skills and knowledge necessary to achieve as "normal students in a regular classroom." By taking special education classes in facilities often located away from their regular education peers, students felt isolated and stigmatized. This perpetuated a feeling of being different and accentuated the differences between the regular and special education.

According to the students, classes in special education are smaller, students are able to work at a slower pace, and there is more interaction among students and teachers. These attributes, however, are considered both positive and negative. They enable learning to occur, but not enough to boost students to the level required to reenter the regular classroom. The students were concerned about the social stigma attached to being in what some called "mental education" year after year. In addition, being in special education meant they earned no graduation credit in the subject in which they received help.

On the positive side, students were clear in their expression of contentment with the positive features of special education. For 78.3 percent of the students interviewed, this was their classroom of choice. They cited curriculum and instruction (38.8%), the teacher (23.6%), classroom structure (22.9%), and classroom ambiance (18.5%) as reasons for their preference. The fact that the material was taught differently and easier to learn was cited most often as the reason students liked their special education classes better than regular classes.

Summary

Elementary students by and large were satisfied with the special education services they received. They credited their teachers for much of the success they experienced. The students spoke positively about the role of the teacher in creating a positive learning environment. Many students talked about how much fun they had and how they were rewarded for a "job well done." In special education classes, the material was taught differently to make the learning task easier. For most elementary students needing special education services, the special education class was the classroom of choice. The major concern expressed by some students was that they might be falling further behind their regular education peers.

As students moved up to middle or junior high school, their feelings about being in special education changed. Peer identification became more important and the stigma of being different was accentuated. The culture of the special education classroom inculcated a set of values, norms, and beliefs that was different from that of the regular classroom. Many students were appreciative of the success they experienced in special education and attributed their achievement to the curriculum and instruction, classroom structure, classroom ambiance and the teacher. Others, while giving credit to these

attributes, noted that despite all the success they were experiencing, they were still falling further behind and the stigma was becoming more pronounced. For these students, a viable solution was to remain in the regular classroom and receive special help in that setting.

By the time they reached high school, special education students began to anguish at a system that failed to address or meet their educational needs. While a majority of these students would choose to remain in special education, they expressed a belief that once you were in special education you would not be able to exit. This was because the class work was too far behind what was taught in the regular classroom. Ironically, the positive attributes of special education (e.g., slower pace, individualized attention) that enabled them to succeed also became barriers for their re-entry into regular education. A related problem was that special education classes did not provide credits to meet graduation requirements. The stigma of being different became an indelible part of the students' self-image by the time they were ready to graduate.

It is clear that while special education has been a positive experience for most students, what goes on in these classrooms is not enough. An accelerated program that educationally catapults students to increasingly higher levels of achievement is critically needed. Special education students do not need less at a slower pace. They need more at a faster pace -- if they are ever going to catch up with their regular education peers.

It is also clear that a significant number of intermediate and high school students would prefer receiving special education services in the regular classroom, mainly to avoid being treated differently than the regular students. In the interview sample, all intermediate and high school students apparently received services in a pull-out setting. Over one-third (35.7%) of the intermediate students would like to receive help in the regular classroom. More than 20 percent of the high school students would like to do the same.

Survey of Special Education Staff

The survey was conducted in April-May 1990 at a stratified random sample of 21 schools throughout the state. The survey included special education teachers, school administrators, and members of special services teams. All administrators and special education teachers at the selected schools were requested to complete the survey. Members of the special services teams were randomly selected within each of the seven districts. A total of 153 individuals returned completed survey forms, providing a response rate of 71.2%.

In the survey, respondents were asked to rate concerns, issues and problems (CPIs) on two dimensions. They rated each CPI in terms of its importance and satisfaction on a five-point scale. The discrepancy between the two ratings was then taken as a measure of priority. For example, if respondents felt that parental involvement was very important (a rating of 5) but were very dissatisfied with the current status of parent involvement (a rating of 1), the discrepancy of 4 would identify parental involvement as a high priority

CPI. In analyzing the survey data, we have chosen a discrepancy of 1.50 or greater as a measure of high priority.

Priority CPIs

Based on the above criteria, this respondent group identified the following as high priority CPIs:

CPI	Priority
Use of non-certified staff	2.67
Inservice training	2.30
Student identification	2.09
Program funding	2.00
Parental involvement	1.70
Interagency coordination	1.54

Survey of Regular School Staff

The survey was conducted in April-May 1990 with a 10 percent random sample of regular teachers at the 21 sample schools. A total of 94 teachers completed the survey with a response rate of 70.2%. Of the teachers responding, 21 were elementary teachers, 30 were intermediate teachers and 43 were high school teachers.

In the survey, respondents were asked to rate concerns, issues and problems (CPIs) on two dimensions. They rated each CPI in terms of its importance and satisfaction on a five-point scale. The discrepancy between the two ratings was then taken as a measure of priority. As indicated earlier, we have chosen a discrepancy of 1.50 or greater as a measure of high priority.

Priority CPIs

Based on the above criteria, this respondent group identified the following as high priority CPIs:

CPI	Priority
Paperwork burden	1.98
Support for regular teachers	1.85
Staff recruitment/retention	1.82
Inservice training	1.63
Early identification of students	1.62
Mainstreaming	1.52

Parent Survey

The survey was conducted with parents of special education students at the sample schools in April-May 1990. A total of 350 parents completed the survey forms with a response rate of 24.6%. A majority (179) of the respondents were parents of learning disabled students. Fifteen were parents of emotionally handicapped students. The remainder (156) were parents of children with other handicapping conditions.

In the survey, parents were asked to respond to a list of statements on CPIs on a three-point scale (Yes, No, or Not Sure). For example, parents were asked whether they felt their child was diagnosed properly. They would respond by indicating yes, no, or not sure. For each item, the survey data were tabulated to show the percentage of parents choosing each of the three response options.

Priority CPIs

By and large, the parents did not identify any significant concerns, issues or problems with the special education program. If anything, their responses were highly favorable to the program. There were only two relatively weak areas identified by the parents.

First, on the question of whether their child learned things in a different way in the special education class than in the regular class, the parents provided the following responses:

Yes	52.0%
No	14.9%
Not Sure	33.1%

The data indicate that only about one-half of the parents felt that their child was learning things in a different way in the special education class.

Second, on the question of whether they expected their child to be out of special education soon, responses were as follows:

Yes	29.1%
No	38.9%
Not Sure	32.0%

The data show that less than one-third of the parents expected their child to be out of special education soon.

Interviews with Key Stakeholder Groups

The evaluation team conducted interviews with several key stakeholder groups in May 1990. Thirty-five individuals participated in the interviews. The stakeholder groups included:

State Board of Education

DOE Office of the State Superintendent

DOE Office of Instructional Services

DOE District Offices

State legislature

Special Education Advisory Board

Protection and Advocacy Agency

Hawaii Association for Children and Adults with Learning Disabilities

Aloha State Association of the Deaf

Department of Human Services

Department of Health

University of Hawaii

Most of the interviews were conducted on site. In a few cases, as a result of schedule conflicts, the interviews were conducted over the telephone. The average interview was approximately 40 minutes in length.

The interviews provided a wide range of perceptions on the special education services provided to handicapped students in Hawaii. The interviewees identified a long list of concerns, problems and issues on various aspects of the special education program. The following sections summarize these concerns, problems and issues.

> We should remind the reader that what follows is a summary of composite views expressed by members of the stakeholder groups. They are not inferences or conclusions reached by the research team.

Student Identification

There is a lack of valid or sensitive instruments for student identification and evaluation. Selection criteria should include performance assessment or curriculum-based tests (not

just norm-referenced assessment) and part of it should be conducted inhouse (e.g., by special education teachers) rather than by an outside team.

The LD category includes many students who can function in the regular classroom, given appropriate help and attention. Many LD students do not belong in special education. The criteria being unclear, students are identified on the basis of the assessment teams' perceptions and there are inter-district discrepancies.

Criteria should be tightened up to reduce the LD population. LD criteria should be made more stringent or conservative. "When in doubt, do not label."

Special education is used by regular teachers to get rid of problem students. The system is skewed toward certification.

We do not have an adequate understanding of what constitutes a learning disability. Hazy criteria end up in enlarged groups. DOE gets caught up in timelines and procedures. Mandated timelines create haste in accomplishing tasks.

It is a disservice to students to equate learning problems with learning disabilities. Many LD students are just slow students.

The federal government might inadvertently be promoting special education growth. When LD students are medically certified, there is no problem. We have a problem when a behavioral problem is construed as a learning disability.

The LD population should be shrunk. The criteria are vague and there are inter-district disparities. LD has been equated with a "rubbish can" category. Students with behavioral problems should be served by alternative programs. "We should not be proud to have large numbers!" A lot of students seem not to benefit from special education. Perhaps whether a student can benefit from the program should be used as a criterion for selection.

A large proportion of the LD population consists of students of Hawaiian ancestry and language minority students who show a different behavior pattern. No proper evaluation is conducted for students of limited English proficiency. There is also the question of who should pay for an independent evaluation.

Using middle class values on how students should behave at any time point is problematic. Training for regular teachers on this is needed. We are too quick to label students.

The label of special education carries a long lasting stigma that follows students into their adulthood. Being labeled as the "junk pile" is not helping any students.

Staffing for EH students needs to be looked at. The EH population has increased. EH students are underidentified. Parents opt for the LD label even though needs are more severe.

Some interviewees believe that early identification is essential. Early intervention is the key to effective remediation. Students should be identified in kindergarten or first grade.

In particular, EH students need to be identified early. There is an inordinate time lag before students are certified. In some cases, by the time they are certified, it is too late for remediation. There are more LD students now because parents are more aware of learning disabilities.

On the other hand, others feel that we should allow time for young students to develop with the regular education teachers, particularly with regard to speech criteria. Some students may take longer to mature. Students' behavior may be misinterpreted by the use of inappropriate standards. There should be no special education at the elementary level.

Student Placement

LD and other mildly handicapped students may be placed in regular classes. Public Law 94-142 may have been a hindrance rather than a help with regard to LD students. Most LD students can get by in the regular class. Shrinking LD populations would reduce staffing problems so more serious problems can receive proper attention. In a pull-out setting, students can't bridge the gap between pull-out and mainstreaming if we teach in isolation. Separate resource rooms make students lose track of the core curriculum and receive watered-down, slow paced instruction.

With respect to special services, placement of students should be based on availability of therapists on a particular school campus as well as least-restrictive-environment considerations.

The "gap" group needs to be taken care of. They are not quite regular students but they are not special education students either. The federally funded Chapter 1 or Chapter 2 programs may take care of many of these students. We might implement extended school year and/or extended school day for students with behavioral problems.

Students are not placed in age appropriate groups. Many ages and many grade levels are put in the same class. Some classes are like a one-room schoolhouse. Putting hearing impaired students in the regular class is a mistake. These students should be placed in a "center" setting. As needed, appropriate placements on the mainland should be provided.

Some interviewees believe that some special education students (e.g., comatose students) belong in a health setting rather than an educational setting. However, this is an ethnical issue as well as a cost-benefit issue.

Instruction/Treatment

EH students need to receive a broad based treatment package, including home-based reinforcement and community support. Mental health services alone are not potent enough to "fix" the child.

While students are in school, services are okay. When they are out of school, that's another matter. The concern is over transition services. There are no agencies to help students after they graduate from high school. More attention should be paid to life after high school for students not going to college.

The use of technology has many advantages. DOE should find ways to adapt technology to serve special education students.

IEP's are very micro, consisting of drills and practice. More emphasis should be placed on skills at the concrete level (e.g., cooking).

Pre-referral services should be emphasized more. Such services should be provided early (e.g., in kindergarten through the second grade).

The curriculum does not put enough emphasis on social skills and job skills in preparation for adult life. IEPs should include objectives relating to mainstreaming and social skills.

Curriculum and instructional strategies should place more emphasis on advanced skills so that deaf, blind, or mentally retarded students can learn more than very basic English. For example, deaf children should not be treated like babies or first graders. They should be expected to perform without a heavy reliance on interpreters. They should be able to write and learn on their own.

Presently, there are no uniform curriculum standards, resulting in redundancy, overlap and gaps. For example, because of a lack of training, hearing teachers use wrong way to sign, creating misunderstanding between teachers and students (e.g., patient can be a noun or an adjective). The legislature should recognize the American Sign Language as a foreign language.

Some classes for the physically handicapped have one or two students, especially on the outer islands. There should be more students to make it cost-effective. There are more students out there. Parents tend to keep students at home.

Many interviewees feel that the special education curriculum is "watered-down and easier," covering less than what regular education offers. Teacher inservice activities are mostly procedural. There is no movement toward quality instruction.

Some interviewees believe that watered-down work was the case years ago -- not now. Special education students need interface with the core curriculum. Special education staff should use different learning modalities to accommodate different learning styles. When students say special education is "easy," it may be that teachers are using the right modalities.

Some members of the stakeholder groups feel strongly that something is wrong if we cannot "fix" LD students. "Every student can succeed!" Others believe that it is more realistic to see program service as part of an ongoing effort to help students with handicapping conditions. Current technology does not provide a "cure" for such students.

Many IEPs do not include short-term measurable objectives. They do not include baseline data and a timeframe for achieving objectives. Inservice is needed to train special education teachers to write such objectives. In addition, behavioral problems (for which LD/EH students may be suspended or expelled) are not reflected in IEPs. There is inconsistency in behavioral management in regular and special education classes.

There is a lack of staff, facilities, and equipment for moderately handicapped children, especially in rural areas. For example, there are no sign language teachers for the hearing impaired in rural areas. Special education staff are not equipped to teach autistic students. Students are made to fit the program instead of the other way around. Least restrictive environment is not implemented appropriately.

There is a lack of uniform standards for instruction and treatment. As a result, services are largely dependent on teacher vagaries.

Related Services

The Department of Health (DOH) suffers from shortage of personnel and low salary. It is difficult to get services, especially in outlying areas. In many cases, mental health services are provided on a consultation basis with teachers only. More direct services to students should be provided. Having a pool of "floater" therapists might help.

As a quality monitoring mechanism, standards should be developed for the provision of related services. At present, the quality of services depends on individual service providers. Special services people should upgrade their skills and be familiar with the most recent research.

Mental health services are sometimes too little and too late to be effective, particularly for students from dysfunctional families. It takes an integrated approach involving all support agencies. It is not always possible to organize such a package.

"When the engine has run too many miles without oil and is severely damaged, it is hard for the mechanic to fix it." The same is true of EH students. We need to catch them early to ensure treatment success. Usually, by the time they are certified, it is too late; the problem has become too severe to fix.

In rural areas, some special education students spend two hours on the bus. In addition, they get dropped off late at school and get picked up early from school, reducing instructional time to less than six hours. Some classes are located in a remote corner of the campus with no bathroom facilities.

Transition plan is behind schedule because the special education program had difficulty getting support from the school board and the DOE. Transition positions at the school level have not been fully staffed. In the area of vocational rehabilitation (VR), the major problems with students are poor attitude, a lack of social skills to form relationships, being easily distracted, and a lack of perseverance. VR counselors work with teachers to place students (LD, EH, hearing-impaired) in community jobs. Time needed to monitor students' job performance is a problem.

Occupational therapy (OT) and physical therapy (PT) services are limited. Steps should be taken to provide training locally for OT and PT instead of importing personnel from the mainland. Over the long haul, the former would be more cost effective. In addition, scholarships and joint efforts with mainland and local higher education institutions can be established to provide OT/PT training programs to alleviate staff shortages. Currently, up to one-half of OT/PT positions are unfilled because of a lack of qualified candidates.

DOH has not done its part in providing OT/PT services. DOE has to divert funds to fill the gap.

Many schools are in need of appropriate facilities and space for the provision of OT/PT services. Such services are not regarded as an integral part of special education services and service providers are not afforded proper respect and courtesy on school campuses. The determination of the least restrictive environment should take into account factors affecting the efficiency (or inefficiency) of delivering services to a large number of home school campuses where needed facilities and space are not available. DOE should acquire long-term facilities for handicapped students.

Mainstreaming

Mainstreamed students create extra burden for regular teachers. There is a lack of support to deal with mainstreamed students. DOE should provide more resources to regular teachers to deal with mainstreamed students.

We should keep a close tab on each student to find out when s/he should be mainstreamed. Explicit exit criteria should be developed. Perhaps a timeline should be established for exiting LD and EH students (e.g., three to five years).

When students are mainstreamed, special education follow-up should be provided. Regular teachers should be trained to handle behavioral problems. In particular, classroom management skills should be strengthened.

Resource rooms represent a viable way of providing service, a good use of resources. Least restrictive environment should be implemented more. There should be more mainstreaming. Public Law 94-142 makes people overserve special education students. The pull-out setting makes students miss regular activities. The mildly handicapped should not be pulled out. Instead, team teaching should be used. Pull-out is damaging. The longer students stay in special education, the worse they get, along with the stigma attached.

When students are semi-mainstreamed, there should be ongoing (e.g., weekly) dialog between the regular and special education teachers. Mainstreamed students, particularly severely handicapped students, are oftentimes "dumped" in the regular classroom without support.

Student Opportunities

Steps should be taken to provide more role models for special education students. For example, a concerted effort should be made to increase recruitment of staff with handicapping conditions. In addition, the range of learning modalities should be expanded for special education students in higher education. Students with handicapping conditions are having difficulty getting into or performing well in higher education (e.g., University of Hawaii, Community Colleges).

Staff Preparation

Special education inservice training, now voluntary, should be made mandatory, perhaps as part of the teacher evaluation process. Release time should be provided so that inservice training can be conducted on school days rather than on weekends. Substitute teachers should be used to enable special education teachers to attend inservice training. Funds should be provided to specialists -- not just top administrators -- to attend conferences on the mainland.

Inservice training should be more intensive. For example, the state acquired 400 lap-top computers for IEP preparation. One hour of inservice training on the use of lap-tops was not sufficient. Inservice training should be provided to special education staff on current strategies (e.g., cooperative learning).

Districts should have more discretionary funds for inservice training and for implementing innovative practices on their own. Many districts have embarked on improvement initiatives.

Some interviewees believe that pre-service training should include both pedagogy and content area knowledge, particularly at the secondary level. Students trying to get a diploma should have teachers who have content area expertise. Moreover, some believe that special education staff may not have expertise to handle the more severe handicapping conditions (e.g., severely emotionally disturbed).

Others, however, indicate that it is impossible to have expertise in all content areas. They believe that a high level of content expertise is not necessary when working with lower-achieving students.

Special education teachers may not have the content knowledge to provide effective services. The use of workbooks and worksheets alone is not sufficient. The University of Hawaii should offer training in pedagogy and content area expertise. The training should also include IEP development as well as civil rights requirements and legislative mandates.

The University of Hawaii (UH) has a very limited training program for special education. UH is not providing sufficient numbers of graduates to meet existing needs.

UH should base its program more on what is happening in the schools. For example, it should broaden training to cover a range of handicapping conditions. Training is also needed in understanding advocacy groups and how to work with them.

UH's special education program is generally good. However, there should be more emphasis on management and leadership skills.

DOE should work with UH to accommodate existing conditions by taking in more students and develop other teacher training programs.

UH's training program requires too many credits for certification. Steps might be taken to modify certification requirements.

UH should develop an OT/PT program. We might offer scholarships (with conditions attached) for OT/PT students. Also, mainland universities can develop programs with local hospitals.

DOE could recruit baccalaureate degree holders and provide on the job training and evening courses on special education. There should be a mentorship program for non-certified personnel.

There is an unevenness of staff quality. Some staff are fine; others are "off the wall." The proposed staffing standards need 100 percent implementation to ensure the availability of high quality personnel. Since effective practices in special education are not easily transportable, high quality teachers are essential.

Staff Recruitment

Teacher shortage is a real problem. There is an imbalance between special education students' needs and staff availability. Increased support from the Board of Education and the legislature does not always translate to high quality personnel or more staff expertise. Many schools lack trained teachers, especially for EH students.

UH is not graduating sufficient numbers of special education teachers. Recruiting from the mainland is hampered by Hawaii's severe housing problem. There is a need to familiarize mainland recruits with local conditions to avoid culture shock. Also, DOE might provide relocation support to mainland recruits.

Staff Retention

Staff turnover and burn-out rates are high. Paperwork, high visibility, due process hearings and court cases lead to turnover of staff to regular education. A support system (e.g., a mentorship program) is needed so that special education teachers do not feel alone. DOE might also provide free tuition and/or stipend to attract prospective teachers into a five-year commitment. Perhaps a career ladder rather than higher pay might be more helpful.

Special education teachers suffer from low morale, a sense of isolation and a lack of direction and resource.

Some interviewees suggest that financial incentive be offered to improve staff retention. Others, however, believe that such incentives would not he helpful. "If a person likes his job, he will stay. High pay does not ensure that his heart is in the job." Adjustments to workload (e.g., with help from educational assistants) might be more helpful.

Some interviewees question the wisdom of limiting such incentives to special education staff. What about teachers in science, math and English? They believe that providing incentive (e.g., bonus pay) for special education teachers is the wrong way to go because it would further increase the schism between regular and special education. Better teaching conditions would reduce staff turnover.

In many cases, staff turnover occurs because teachers use special education as a springboard to get into the system. Pay differential will probably not have lasting effects. Recognition and improved self-esteem will improve staff shortage situation.

The "teacher cottage" concept (which provides subsidized housing to teachers within the community) may be revived to provide incentive to work in remote or isolated areas. This will also promote teacher involvement with the community. We might require prospective teachers to enter into contractual arrangements to stay on the job for five to six years.

Incentive has little impact on commitment. Burnout is due to lack of perceived progress or inability to deal with students. Bonus pay or stipend is not the answer. Instead, there should be support to improve teaching strategies and to increase professional satisfaction.

Bonus pay and stipend may slow the exodus, but it is not a long term solution. Salary increase, unless it is huge, will probably not do it. "It may attract, but it will not retain." Paperwork and isolation are major factors contributing to staff turnover.

Differential pay wears out very quickly. Special education teachers are not talking about money. They want more recognition. DOE might have a special education teacher recognition day to boost morale.

Program Structure

There is a need to re-think the entire concept of special education. There is a need to revamp the entire system into a non-categorical system, a practice already implemented in many states. There is a need to re-structure the entire system to use special education staff in more efficient ways, particularly with respect to LD students. For example, special education teachers could be "mainstreamed" to play a support role on a teacher assistance team, providing support for regular education teachers.

Former special education teachers currently serving as regular teachers may be asked to handle mildly handicapped children in the regular classrooms. In addition, educational assistants represent a resource that could be tapped to ease staff shortage in an inexpensive way.

Smaller class size will allow regular teachers to handle the students, without having to push them out to special education. Special education teachers can be put in a pool as an integrated resource.

Coordination/Integration

Only lip service is paid to the concept of coordination/integration of regular and special education programs. In reality, there is an invisible (glass) wall separating the two. There is a need to mainstream special education or "specialize" regular education.

Principals play a key role in school level coordination/integration. Special education has offered "Administrators Institutes" to cover special education requirements. The

implementation of School and Community Based Management (SCBM) might afford creative flexibility under a strong leadership.

All programs, including regular education and special education, should be directed toward the same outcomes. Special education has been moving in a different direction (e.g., separate curriculum, separate campuses, pull-out settings). Is special education after different goals?

Program Impact

There are no solid data on program impact. Much of what is said about special education is hearsay or rumors. It is hard to sort out facts from fiction. There is a need to initiate systematic data collection to support or refute the various claims. For example, students may be "regressing" in special education. However, there are no solid data to back this up. On the other hand, there is no evidence that special education is helping participants on the basis of such indicators as rate of mainstreaming, parental satisfaction and transition status. Services are appropriate but we don't know how effective they are. Services are probably not making much progress with most students.

Services are not really helpful to students. It is more the same as regular education. There is a lot of reliance on paper-pencil methods. Instruction is individualized only by material packages. Special education teachers should receive more training to keep up with the latest research.

Program Support

According to some interviewees, the Board of Education and the legislature are very supportive of special education, as evidenced by funding and position increase each year.

However, others feel that special education lacks support from the DOE leadership and the legislature. Some indicate that the school board sees the value of special education but the legislature does not. It is simply good politics to attend first to regular education. DOE is doing the best with what it has, but what it has is not adequate.

Program Costs

Special education is costly. A large portion of the DOE budget is devoted to special education. The program has grown and is getting bigger. Removing barriers at school campuses is a major cost item in and of itself. The legislature is not aware of the needs and costs associated with special education.

Somehow, a line needs to be drawn to determine who belongs in special education. Some students (e.g., severely handicapped students) may need alternative programs outside of the DOE system. In some cases, it may be more cost-effective to serve students in a health rather than an education setting.

Parent/Community Involvement

While there has been a change in attitude and a shift from advocacy to cooperation regarding parental involvement, parents still lack meaningful involvement in IEP development. IEPs should be written in language that parents can understand. Parents often sign consent forms without knowing what tests would be used to assess their children.

There should be more emphasis on parental responsibility. There should be a partnership between home and school. Parents should not just turn over their children to the special education program. We need to bridge gaps among school, family and the community. We could provide parents with bridging activities that they can use at home. Community volunteer services should include the use of senior citizens and grandparents and provide field trips for stimulation. In each school, parent task forces may be set up to implement quality assurance practices.

Community-based instruction should be emphasized. Training should be provided to parents and grandparents to make this effective.

Advocacy Groups

Some interviewees believe that parents receive counterproductive advice from advocacy groups, creating obstacles to progress. Advocacy groups are more a hindrance than a help, fighting the DOE for trivial reasons. The advocacy system does more harm than good in trying to help parents and their children.

On the other hand, other interviewees believe that the advocacy groups have been more a help than a hindrance. Advocacy groups have been generally productive and more cooperative than litigious. Rural areas in particular need advocacy groups but find it difficult to access the services. Advocacy groups are trying to help and are helping. Their work has made educating handicapped students a high priority. Parents are supportive of their efforts.

LD and EH program processes

Among a wide range of concerns, issues and problems, the present study has paid special attention to the referral, screening, certification and re-evaluation systems for LD and EH students. Our review of state and program documents indicates that to be identified as having a specific learning disability, a student must show a severe discrepancy (1.5 standard deviations or greater) between ability and achievement in one or more of the following academic areas:

- Oral expression
- Listening comprehension
- Written expression
- Basic reading skills

- Reading comprehension
- Mathematics calculation
- Mathematics reasoning

In addition, the student must show a processing deficit in two or more of the following areas:

- Perception
- Memory
- Reasoning
- Communication

To be identified as having an emotional handicap, a student must chronically exhibit one or more of the following general characteristics:

- An inability to learn that cannot be explained by intellectual, sensory or health factors
- Inappropriate types of behavior or feelings under normal circumstances
- A general mood of unhappiness or depression
- A tendency to develop physical symptoms, pain or fears associated with personal or school problems
- An inability to develop or maintain satisfactory interpersonal relationships with peers and teachers

In implementing standards that underline its operational procedures, the special education program takes into consideration several well accepted and widely practiced principles, including non-categorical instructional services, use of the least restrictive environment, emphasis on transition goals, and the provision of integrated services.

Teacher Perceptions

There is evidence that the special education teachers, school administrators, special services teams and district specialists were relatively satisfied with the performance of the four systems. On a five-point scale, they rated various aspects of the systems as 3.0 or above.

The regular education staff also provided generally positive ratings on the performance of the four systems. With a rating of 3.20 on a five-point scale, they indicated that procedures used to evaluate special education students are valid and reliable. They generally agreed (rating = 3.74) that explicit criteria are used to determine identification and eligibility.

Potential Problem Areas

While teacher perceptions are generally favorable, there is obviously room for improvement. In fact, the data indicate a general dissatisfaction with the validity and reliability of procedures used to evaluate EH students.

On the question of whether the four systems have been implemented as planned, there is evidence that there is a considerable time lag before students are certified. In some cases, by the time they are certified, it may be too late for remediation. The 1989 Legislative Reference Bureau report identified failure to meet the mandatory timelines for student evaluation as a problem area.

On the clarity of operational procedures the report raised concerns over the adequacy of the evaluation procedures and criteria for certification. The report recommended revision of the current identification and testing procedures.

There is some evidence that the standards are somewhat unclear and that students are identified on the basis of the assessment teams' perceptions, giving rise to inter-district discrepancies. There is a perception that the EH population has increased and that such students are underidentified. Parents often opt for the LD label even though their child's needs are more severe.

There is a wide spread perception that the LD category includes students who can function in the regular classroom, given appropriate help and attention. Many LD students do not belong in special education. Many policymakers and state administrators believe that the LD criteria should be made more stringent or conservative to reduce the LD population. Others indicate the special education is used by regular teachers to get rid of problem students and that the system is skewed toward certification. Some feel that the special education gets caught up in timelines and procedures, which creates haste in accomplishing tasks.

Another critical question has to do with the reliability and validity of these systems in terms of meeting the needs of students. There is evidence that a better understanding of what constitutes a learning disability is needed. A large proportion of the LD population consists of students of Hawaiian ancestry and language minority students who exhibit behavior patterns different from the school norms. Using middle class values on how students should behave at a particular stage of their mental and emotional development can be problematic. In addition, the systems do not adequately address the needs of the "gap" group which consists of students who seem to belong in neither special education nor regular education.

Some policymakers believe that students with behavioral problems should be served by alternative programs. A lot of students seem not to benefit from special education. Perhaps whether a student can benefit from the program should be used as a criterion for selection. To make the systems more efficient, stakeholder groups have suggested inservice training for both special and regular education teachers on multicultural awareness and understanding.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The study comes at a time when special educators at the local, state and federal levels are grappling with a host of issues facing special education. Most of the CPIs confronting the stakeholder groups in Hawaii are similar to those identified elsewhere in the nation. In our view, these and other issues, complex as they are, are but different aspects of three larger questions inherent in the provision of educational services to exceptional children:

1. Are special education students appropriately identified?

2. Are "special" services provided to the identified students?

3. What are the effects of the provided services?

The study seeks to contribute to a knowledge base which policymakers in Hawaii can use to address these general questions.

The data indicate that the concerns, problems and issues in special education are varied and many. Moreover, most of the CPIs are inextricably related. For example, instruction/treatment issues are related to and compounded by issues of workload and class size, which in turn are related to program funding and support. Furthermore, there appear to be no "quick fixes" for the fundamental questions of how special education students should be identified and, once identified, what kinds of treatment they should receive and for how long. Parental involvement, a potent force in the education of handicapped children, remains a major concern. Staff preparation, recruitment and retention continue to be critical issues. What is needed is a long term effort to restructure the system for providing services to special education students. Such an effort should include a reconceptualization of the nature and needs of special education students, particularly with reference to the mildly handicapped students. It should place the greatest emphasis on integrating special education with regular education. The overall responsibility for educating students, special and regular, must rest on the shoulders of the "regular" teachers. Special and regular education must not move, and must avoid being perceived as moving, in different directions. The glass wall between the two systems must come down so that integrated services can be provided to handicapped children who deserve an equitable and excellent education.

There is strong evidence that special education in the state has made significant improvements during the past several years. All stakeholder groups had no difficulty in identifying lengthy lists of positive program outcomes and accomplishments. Program staff, teachers in particular, are described as dedicated, caring and nurturing. Parent and student groups, in particular, had high praises for special education teachers. Yet, of all educational service providers, special education teachers are perhaps most vulnerable to heavy workload and emotional strain, leading to high rates of turnover and burnout. Special education must nurture its staff, as the latter nurture their charges in the classroom, by providing adequate support both in funding and in professional development and recognition to enhance educational services provided to handicapped students.

Among the top priority CPIs are instruction/treatment, mainstreaming and student identification. With respect to instruction/treatment, there are no hard data to substantiate the effectiveness of special education services. There is a perception that such services are probably not doing much good for special education students. Many believe that the services are "appropriate" but are not sure about their impact on students. By and large, students like special education classes because they are slow-paced and easy. Many students believe that once they are in the program they will probably never leave the program. Nearly one-half of the parents do not think their children are learning in a way different from what happens in the regular class. Like their children, they do not think students in the program will exit soon. When students finally exit the program and enter the mainstream, they are often perceived to be a burden on the regular teachers who lack training and expertise to meet their special needs. There is considerable evidence that the student identification process is somewhat unclear, inconsistent, and quite possibly biased when used with culturally diverse children. There are serious definitional problems with respect to what constitutes a learning disability or emotional handicap, giving rise to inter-district disparities.

There is evidence that a significant percentage of the students bearing the LD or EH label can function successfully in the regular classroom, given proper help and attention. The use of educational assistants to help meet the needs of these students under the supervision of the regular teacher appears to be a viable option.

It is evident that regular teachers are in need of assistance in meeting the needs of mainstreamed students. Such assistance can range from receiving information on the special needs of mainstreamed LD and EH students from the special education teachers to participating in inservice training on how to address the needs of mainstreamed students.

There should be a higher level of integration between special and regular education. The emergence of a special education culture is likely to do more harm than good to special education students. Being different often induces a sense of isolation and shame on the part of special education students. Special education, particularly with respect to mildly handicapped students, should play a support role to augment and enhance the overall education program for all students.

There is evidence that communication gaps exist among entities working to serve the needs of special education students. These entities include the state legislature, the Board of Education, the Department of Education, the Special Education Section, district offices, special education parents, advocacy groups and the community at large. These gaps must be bridged to avoid an erosion of confidence, a breeding of distrust, and a deterioration of efficiency.

Other than the attainment of specific IEP objectives, there is precious little data on overall program impact. In this regard, much of what is said about the special education services is hearsay or claims that have yet to be substantiated by data. A data system should be established to provide a solid information base for decision-making with respect to special education.

Finally, we believe that long-term, lasting improvement is often the result of many incremental changes which emerge over time. Since the CPIs are multi-faceted and inter-related, resolving one CPI is likely to also have favorable effects on the resolution of other CPIs. Moreover, long-lasting change often results from more direct, short-term gains for students. No resolution of any CPIs can be beneficial unless it also benefits the ultimate beneficiary -- students with handicapping conditions. We further believe that the best resolutions of any CPIs would come from groups and individuals who are affected by such resolutions.

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